United Nations S/2003/769

Security Council

Distr.: General
29 July 2003

Original: English

Letter dated 29 July 2003 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

In my briefing to the Security Council on 16 July 2003, I informed the Council that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) had indicated its readiness to deploy 1,500 troops to Liberia by mid-August 2003, to serve as a "vanguard force" for the multinational force that I proposed in my letter of 28 June to the Security Council (S/2003/678). At their meeting in Dakar on 22 July 2003, the ECOWAS Defence and Security Commission and the ECOWAS Mediation and Security Council decided that the "vanguard force" would comprise two battalions from Nigeria (one of which would be transferred from the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone) and a third battalion made up of troops contributed by Ghana (250 troops), Mali (250 troops) and Senegal (250 troops). The battalion coming from the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) would be deployed first, followed by the second Nigerian battalion from Lagos and, finally, the composite battalion from Ghana, Mali and Senegal.

I am deeply concerned at the dramatic deterioration of the situation on the ground, following renewed fighting in Monrovia on 18 July. It is therefore absolutely essential to accelerate the deployment of the ECOWAS vanguard force to Monrovia to pave the way for the early deployment of the multinational force. I am encouraged by the determination of ECOWAS and the Security Council to take the necessary steps to that end. The Government of Nigeria has indicated its willingness to begin deploying its two battalions to Liberia immediately, provided the necessary logistical support is made available by the international community. In this connection, on 25 July the United States of America announced that it will position appropriate military capabilities off the coast of Liberia to support the deployment of the ECOWAS forces.

The United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone stands ready to transport the Nigerian battalion that will be transferred from the Mission, since it was due for repatriation under the Mission's drawdown plan. Should it become necessary, and if authorized by the Security Council, UNAMSIL also has the capacity to sustain that battalion, as well as the second Nigerian battalion, for a limited period in Liberia without adversely affecting the Mission's operational capacity. To that end, I believe that it may be within the Security Council's jurisdiction to give UNAMSIL the necessary mandate to use its resources to provide full support for the deployment and sustainment of the ECOWAS vanguard force. I therefore appeal to the Council to give this matter urgent consideration.

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As the Security Council is aware, the deployment of the ECOWAS vanguard force would be the first phase of an interlocking three-phase deployment. The deployment of the full multinational force would constitute Phase 2, followed by a United Nations peacekeeping operation, which would be Phase 3.

The Economic Community of West African States is currently finalizing the concept of operations of the vanguard force. The priority task of the ECOWAS vanguard force would be to stabilize the situation in Monrovia as President Taylor departs. It would, however, be important to reinforce the vanguard force in a timely manner. Phase 2 troops, particularly those from the Member State that would lead the multinational force, should arrive immediately after President Taylor's departure, in order to facilitate the installation of a successor Government and the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The multinational force would be relieved by a United Nations peacekeeping operation within the shortest possible time. I have therefore instructed the Secretariat to begin the necessary planning for the deployment of the envisaged United Nations peacekeeping mission.

The military component of such a United Nations operation would include ECOWAS troops from the multinational force, as well as other international troop contributors. It will be important for the Security Council to take an early decision on the establishment of the envisaged United Nations mission, in order to facilitate the timely generation of the military personnel required for this phase.

It would also be essential for the Security Council to authorize a robust mandate for the envisaged United Nations peacekeeping force, in order to ensure that it has a credible deterrence capability. The overall objective of the United Nations peacekeeping operation would be to support the implementation of the envisaged comprehensive peace agreement, culminating in the holding of free and fair elections, which should be a key — but not the only — benchmark for the gradual drawdown of the mission. The United Nations peacekeepers would provide a security umbrella and create the necessary conditions for the holding of the elections. Other specific tasks to be performed by the military component would include assisting the interim government in disarming and demobilizing the armed groups, providing security at vital locations and government buildings, including at major seaports and airports, facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and protecting civilians facing violence in areas of its immediate deployment.

Initially, the size of the United Nations peacekeeping mission is likely to be driven by the need to support key activities, in particular the political process, the humanitarian effort, and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. However, the specific number of troops and other personnel required would be determined by a multidisciplinary assessment mission to Liberia, which I intend to dispatch once vital areas of the country become accessible, following the deployment of the multinational force.

As indicated in my letter to the Security Council dated 8 July (S/2003/695), my Special Representative, Jacques Paul Klein, will lead and coordinate the activities of the United Nations in Liberia. It is my expectation that Mr. Klein's office will not only play an active role in the political process in Liberia, but will also constitute the advance party of a multidimensional United Nations peacekeeping mission. In view of the appointment of Mr. Klein, and the envisaged establishment of a United Nations operation in Liberia, the mandate of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in Liberia will naturally have to be

terminated. The Office, including its staff and assets, would be absorbed by the office of my Special Representative.

As the security situation in Liberia stabilizes, and following the installation of an interim government, the United Nations presence and role in Liberia would be expanded, as necessary, with a view to giving the office of my Special Representative and other United Nations agencies the capacity to support the interim government. Pending the findings of the United Nations assessment mission, the following principal areas of support by the United Nations can be readily identified: working with the World Bank and the other stakeholders to develop and support a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme; supporting the resettlement of returning Liberian refugees and internally displaced persons and providing care for Sierra Leonean and Ivorian refugees in Liberia; supporting the restructuring and rehabilitation of the judiciary and the police force; assisting the interim government to extend its authority throughout the country; promoting respect for human rights and good governance; mobilizing bilateral assistance for the reform and restructuring of the army; and providing assistance for the conduct of free and fair national elections.

Given the envisaged interlocking nature of the deployments in the three phases described above, arrangements are being put in place for close coordination between ECOWAS, the United Nations and the lead country in the multinational force. ECOWAS has invited the Secretariat to provide military, logistics and budget officers to participate in a series of ongoing planning meetings convened by the subregional organization. The United States is also participating in those meetings. It is my expectation that similar arrangements will be put in place for planning the deployment of the full multinational force, including arrangements for the subsequent embedding of United Nations military planners in the headquarters of that force.

Subject to guidance by the Security Council, it is my intention to proceed immediately with the necessary preparations for the envisaged United Nations operation in Liberia.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**